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ABSTRACT

This document discusses the role of assessment within corporate colleges within the further education system in Britain. It is intended to support curriculum managers who are currently implementing the various post-16 qualification systems for students within further education. The publication is divided into two sections. Section 1 analyzes the role of assessment within corporate colleges and synthesizes the issues the colleges are confronting. Section 2 describes the student assessment requirements within the National Curriculum and GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) A level and AS examinations, National Vocational Qualifications and General NVQs. Summary charts on each system and a list of 18 information sources are included. (KC)

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examining assessment

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Assessment issues and regimes in post-16 education and training

examining assessment

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Preface

This document discusses the role of assessment within corporate colleges and aims to support curriculum managers who are currently implementing the various post-16 qualification systems. The publication is divided into two sections:

- **Section 1 – Assessment Issues**

  An analysis of the role of assessment within corporate colleges and a synthesis of the issues colleges are confronting.

- **Section 2 – Post-16 Assessment Regimes**

  A descriptive account of the assessment requirements within the National Curriculum and GCSE, A level and AS examinations, NVQs and GNVQs. The final pages provide summary charts on each regime.

The primary purpose of the document is to update curriculum managers, assessors and internal verifiers in FE and sixth form colleges on the current developments in the assessment regimes in the post-16 qualification tracks.

National requirements

Colleges will need to respond to national requirements related to assessment which have been set in:

- the *Charter for Further Education* (DFE);
- the inspection framework outlined in *Assessing Achievement* (FEFC);
- the **guidance from the accrediting and awarding bodies** regarding the new assessment regimes, new codes of practice and approval criteria.

The Charter for Further Education (DFE, 1993) requires colleges to draft their own charters by July 1994 which will indicate to students their rights, including their entitlement to assessment:

- assignments and coursework to be assessed within a set time;
- all courses to meet the assessment requirements for the qualification in hand;
- opportunities to be provided for credit accumulation and transfer;
- study skills to be developed, to include the use of library and computing facilities;
- regular spoken or written progress reports to include reporting on coursework assessment;
- achievements to be assessed and recorded in a clear and comprehensive form.

Colleges are required to develop their own quality assurance procedures and to indicate what they are doing to foster equal opportunities and make provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

In the **inspection framework** outlined in *Assessing Achievement*, FEFC circular 93/28, the guidelines for inspection require that there is a range of programmes and services which meets the needs of potential clients, including assessment services and open and distance learning.

The guidelines stress that equality of opportunity is to be promoted and that student retention and destinations should be monitored. Colleges will be required to provide :

- impartial guidance and information at entry and the assessment of prior learning and experience;
- effective induction programmes and provision for transfer between programmes where appropriate;
- records of students' achievements and regular reporting of progress;
- teaching and learning schemes to ensure a regular schedule of setting, marking and returning of work to students within agreed deadlines;
- assessments to be set at an appropriate standard and achievements tested according to the aims and objectives of the programme;
- assessments that are consistent and fair and ensure that appeals procedures are in place.

The strategy for quality monitoring and enhancement must meet the needs of the examining and validating bodies and the Council's requirements regarding **auditable evidence**.

In the new **codes of practice** from the accrediting bodies and the guidelines regarding centre approval criteria, requirements are made of the awarding bodies and centres regarding assessment. Colleges are required to demonstrate, in order to be approved as a centre, the management arrangements, physical and staff resources and quality assurance and control mechanism that operate to ensure the quality of provision.

The role of assessment in corporate colleges

The national requirements regarding assessment have been set within the context of central prescription in the knowledge, skills and understanding to be demonst.ated. The National Curriculum subject Orders, GNVQs and NVQs, establish a national framework for academic, vocational and occupational competence.

Post-incorporation assessment has taken on a new role beyond that of assessing student progress. **Through prescribed criterion-referenced assessment frameworks determined by the accrediting and awarding bodies and within the operation of a new funding methodology, it will be possible to**:

- identify the knowledge, skills and understanding to be achieved by all learners;
- guide programme design and delivery to meet assessment requirements;
- develop consistent assessment practice across the awarding bodies through agreed or mandatory codes of practice;
- require institutions to report on learner achievement within a common framework so that comparative tables of corporate achievements can be established;
- monitor student, college and TEC area achievement against prescribed levels in the National Targets for Education and Training;
- use learner achievements as a mechanism for funding.

Therefore, by developing a quality assessment framework and enhancing learner achievement, college managers will be enhancing the future funding of their corporations.

Assessment and defining learning

The developments over the past eight years, which have included the establishment of NCVQ in 1986 and the National Curriculum announced in the 1988 Education Reform Act, have led to the emergence of distinct qualification tracks, each with its own assessment regime and requirements.

The qualification frameworks that have evolved, within the National Curriculum, vocational GNVQs, and occupational NVQs, have marked a shift away from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced assessment. The purpose of such systems with delineated criteria, levels, attainment targets and statements for judging performance or achievement, has been to specify the knowledge, skills, and understanding to be achieved in the classroom or learning environment.

Currently curriculum managers are grappling with qualification frameworks in transition which have been evolving since the mid-1980s:

- the **National Curriculum review** which has been announced in the Final Report from Sir Ron Dearing will mean that the whole school curriculum will be redefined to respond to new subject Orders which are to be available for introduction in September 1995; **new GCSE syllabuses** will need to be produced to be in line with the new National Curriculum subject Orders and changes to Key Stage 4;
- the A level and AS exam structure is being discussed with the introduction of new **subject cores for A level subjects** and modular schemes within a potential new framework;
- **GNVQs** are nationally available in five programme areas, and three further pilot programme areas in 1993-94. Fourteen vocational areas should be in place by 1995;
- the National Vocational Qualifications framework, now accrediting over 90% of the workforce qualifications, is still developing as new Lead Bodies are set up and new NVQs for Level 5 are agreed.

The new qualification tracks are intended to replace most of the existing academic and vocational qualifications, but during this period of transition the major awarding bodies BTEC, RSA and C&G, continue to provide qualifications outside NVQs and GNVQs,and non-certificated adult learning programmes also provide learning opportunities for hundreds of thousands of learners across the country.

The **National Open College Network (NOCN)**, which accredits adult programmes also establishes a separate framework for college schemes. Independent professional bodies provide certification through their own schemes, some within the NVQ framework. The GCSE examining groups provide numerous syllabuses for a great diversity of subjects – the NC subjects within the National Curriculum framework, many subjects outside this structure. There are currently some modular A levels and different syllabuses allow for different levels of coursework. By the end of the century the post-16 curriculum may look very different. In the meantime, practitioners are having to deal with rapid change.

The major challenge for college curriculum managers, who are providing assessment opportunities on a vast spectrum of programmes with different assessment regimes, is to provide a coherent learning experience for all learners to recognise prior learning experience and maximise access to assessment opportunities. A central issue is the development of a college assessment policy and verification framework to ensure the quality of provision and access to fair assessment.

Assessment and programme design and delivery

Teachers and lecturers have indicated that the introduction of the National Curriculum and the NVQ/GNVQ assessment framework has influenced their role in the classroom and affected the design and delivery of programmes.

- Many teachers have commented that criterion-referenced assessment involves extensive record keeping and limits the time that can be spent on learning. The Ron Dearing Final Report which is aimed at slimming down the National Curriculum is very much a response to this concern.
- The evaluation of GNVQs has demonstrated that many lecturers and teachers feel that the external tests are resulting in a move away from integrated learning programmes and assignments, towards unit-based delivery and assessment.
- The risk of breaking up the learning experience into small particles has concerned both academics and practitioners. If assessors are to ensure that all performance criteria have been met, which often entails the recording of decisions over hundreds of criteria, this may lead to a lack of coherence in the learning and assessment programme. Colleges are attempting to develop a task-based approach in the setting of assignments and other assessments so that an activity or piece of evidence does not simply demonstrate a single element. The grouping of elements around a common theme or scenario which represents the occupational or vocational setting of the prescribed programme area can lead to the development of a more holistic approach to learning.

Colleges will need to translate criterion-referenced assessment systems into meaningful learning and assessment activities that provide for a holistic approach to learning while meeting external verifier demands in the recording of assessment decisions. The design of the internal learning and assessment model and how this is to be delivered will be an important staff development issue for colleges.

Consistency in assessment

The purpose behind criterion-referenced assessment has been to underpin the validity and reliability of assessment. With clearly stated criteria on which to base judgements, the process of assessment has been said to be transparent, ensuring reliability. However, practitioners have experienced difficulty in interpreting criteria and agreeing on what is valid and sufficient evidence.

Although the new frameworks, in the pursuit of rigour, have progressed in a "never-ending spiral of specification" (see *FEU Occasional Paper 2* by Alison Wolf) with new range statements and evidence indicators, which were not part of the early NVQs, the process of assessment and verification remains dependent upon judgement and interpretation. Recognising that another layer of unit specification would tax centres and may not lead to greater consistency, the accrediting and awarding bodies have agreed that what is important is to develop the "shared conceptualisations of what count as competence" (Howard Black, Competence and Assessment, Issue 20) of assessors and verifiers through the development of guidance and exemplification material and the training of assessors and verifiers to TDLB standards.

The TDLB assessor and verifier awards provide centres with a framework within which to develop processes for standardising the interpretation of criteria and developing cross-college assessment and verification procedures. Programme team training sessions help colleges to develop a shared interpretation of TDLB performance criteria and can provide the basis for developing programme design and delivery practice.

Codes of practice

The development of codes of practice and common accords has also been part of the attempt to safeguard consistency through establishing common practice across the awarding bodies.

- For GCSE assessment the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) has introduced the GCSE **Mandatory Code of Practice** which controls the practice of examining groups through the specification of mandatory processes and the delineation of the relationship between SCAA and the individual examining group's governing council.
- In NVQS, the new **Awarding Bodies Common Accord** which is to be subsumed within the **NVQ Guide**, focuses on establishing consistency through the certification of verifiers and assessors, with April 1995 set as the date by which verifiers need to have secured certification and centres have developed an action plan for training assessors.
- The **GNVQ Code of Practice on External Assessment 1993–94** also outlines the agreement reached with the awarding bodies on the nature of external testing to move towards greater consistency through common test specifications and a common test model.
- For the operation of the GCE examining boards, the Secretary of State has announced that there should be a new **A level code of practice**.

Colleges play a key role in the process of assessment in that they as first tier assessors and internal verifiers judge all pieces of evidence which are produced for a final portfolio or coursework assessment.
Centre policies, codes of practice and guidelines and procedures will need to be in place to complement accrediting and awarding body codes and ensure consistency across programmes and college sites.
The process of writing internal guidelines is central to the development of shared conceptualisations and the securing of a college quality system for assessment.
With developed management information systems colleges will be able to carry out statistical quality assurance to measure the consistency of performance to enhance internal verification.

Assessment and recording and reporting achievement

The emergence of criterion-referenced assessment with specified levels means that there are nationally agreed measures for learner achievement, which provide a framework for comparative tables of institutional achievement, or as they have come to be known, league tables.

- In schools, the current ten-level scale within the National Curriculum indicates the level which learners should reach at particular stages. Although, the ten-level scale has had its critics it is proposed that the scale should be retained for Key Stages 1-3 with the grades from GCSEs operating for Key Stage 4 reporting. The new system will still therefore provide a means of establishing comparative tables.
- In further education and training, the NCVQ/GNVQ framework of Foundation to Advanced level programmes and the NVQ Level 1-5 framework provide a structure for measuring the progress of further education and the workplace.

The **DFE circular 14/92** lays down the requirements for reporting achievement in schools whereby head teachers must report to students their achievements on the 30 September in the year that they reach the age of 16. Schools are using the National Record of Achievement to meet this reporting requirement.

There are no statutory requirements on recording achievement and the use of the National Record of Achievement (NRA) in the college sector. However, the FEFC in its inspection framework indicates the importance of recording student achievement and colleges will be inspected on provision in this area.

Colleges will need to ensure that they are able to track and record student achievements. Learners must be given appropriate feedback and guidance as to their progress to ensure successful completion. The development of software for assessing and recording achievement and computerised information systems for tracking assessment decisions and student attainment will enhance assessor practice and allow colleges to monitor student access to assessment, achievement levels, retention and progression.

Assessment and National Targets

Institutional data can be collected on a local LEA or TEC basis, to establish local targets and on a national basis to develop European and OECD comparisons.

National Targets for Education and Training (NTETS) have provided an impetus to raise the achievement level of those in Britain, but can also provide the Employment Department with a means of measuring TEC area progress. The recent comparative tables of TECs demonstrate the progress made by local communities in acquiring NVQs, and by corporations that have been approved as Investors in People. They can also be used as means of assessing funding targets. Although TECs were asked to establish their baseline figures and future targets were placed against these baselines, statistics on NVQ and IIP take up must also address the wider issue of the fluctuations in the local economy. ED funded projects are currently in progress to measure the influence of output-related funding on Training for Work take-up and achievement levels.

Colleges will need to work with their local TEC to monitor progress towards National Targets. Some TECs have recognised the contribution that the development of GNVQs can make to the achievement of foundation targets and have sponsored developments.

Assessment and performance related funding

The **Further Education Funding Councils'** circulars 93/32, 93/39 and Guidance on the Recurrent Funding Methodology 1994-5 outline a new funding mechanism for corporate colleges which will influence assessment practice. Colleges supported Option E from the circular Funding Learning and these two new circulars provide the framework for a model based on output or achievement related funding.

The **FEFC circular 93/32** proposes a model for colleges based on three learning elements, entry, on programme and achievement. Individual student data will need to be collected to indicate the qualification aim, the qualifications gained and retention levels. Partial achievement is recognised, as too is composite achievement. The Councils attach unit volume ratings and cost-weightings to each qualification listed in their tariff values. Fixed units will be awarded at entry and at achievement which are related to the National Targets. The Councils will expect tri-annual recording of achievement and colleges will need to develop systems to maximise assessment opportunities and unit accreditation.

How achievement is to be equitably defined, evidenced and measured for funding purposes is complex. Many have made the case for measuring and funding **value-added**, rather than simply using raw data taken from qualifications achieved by students. The Newcastle University A level information service (ALIS) team and the Audit Commission in *Unfinished Business* have shown that there is a correlation between GCSE results and success at A level. But they indicate that the means of measuring value-added in the vocational curriculum remains problematic. Initial diagnostic assessment of learners in further education may provide such a tool but systems across colleges are not in place. The FEFCs have commissioned the FEU to carry out work on value-added and progress on this work will be reported upon during 1994. Colleges will continue to be consulted on the emerging funding model as the FEFCs refine the potential performance indicators and procedures for measuring college effectiveness and efficiency.

Colleges will need to establish internal assessment systems in response to the Councils' funding methodology which maximise access to assessment and accreditation.
Initial diagnostic assessment procedures will need to be in place to ensure that students are counselled on to appropriate programmes so that they are able to achieve their qualification aim. Colleges will need to provide for inspection purposes auditable evidence of the procedures operating in the assessment and recording of achievement.

The system that has evolved to fund and inspect corporate colleges is one which is clearly linked with an achievement-led model. In the introduction of new GNVQs, NVQs in a broader range of occupations, modular A levels and GCSEs linked to the revised subject Orders, colleges have the opportunity to review assessment practice and establish a quality assessment framework.

Post-16 Qualification tracks

The debate concerning the post-16 qualification tracks has revolved around the relative merits of norm and criterion-referencing and the barriers to credit transfer between the separate qualification systems each with its own assessment regime.

Critics of A levels have argued that the content-laden, knowledge based exams assessed through norm-referencing that screen candidates for university entrance have led to:

- a lack of rigour in the specification of the **outcomes** of learning;
- an over specialisation and a narrowing of the curriculum based on a body of knowledge which undermines the importance of practical skills and lacks a vocational context;
- a low level of student participation post-16;
- a workforce that is not necessarily well placed to meet the skill shortages of the country.

Criterion-referenced systems have emerged in an attempt to give greater specification to the measurement of performance. The assessment regime in such systems is said to be an outcomes model as it defines the requisite criteria for judging whether competence has been achieved. The NVQ system has been criticised:

- for leading to a reductionist or behaviourist approach and failing to present a dynamic analysis of occupational functions or job roles;
- for leading to the atomisation of learning and assessment in the specification of units, elements, performance criteria, range statements and evidence indicators , often involving the recording of hundreds of statements and for establishing a system which has led to the endless recording of achievement at the cost of learning;
- for proposing that the assessment criteria can be transparent, whereas assessment is dependent upon judgement and the professionalism of the assessors in reaching a common interpretation of competence or achievement;
- for the emphasis on competence which undermines the role of knowledge in the learning and training experience.

NCVQ's position is that the criteria for NVQs unequivocally require the separate assessment of knowledge where this is necessary to confirm competence or "where performance evidence alone is limited and does not permit reliable inference of the possession of necessary knowledge and understanding".

In providing appropriate learning and assessment opportunities, colleges are currently offering a vast range of qualifications on what is still seen as an academic and vocational divide. The separate assessment regimes do not allow for credit transfer as each qualification track is defined by different levels and specifications. Colleges are required to record and report the results of student achievement and will in future be funded on an output-related model which rewards student achievement. A major objective for colleges operating within a new funding methodology and a centrally prescribed qualifications system will be to maintain student access to assessment while ensuring achievement funding. How a developing centrally prescribed criterion-referenced system for further education and the new FEFC funding methodology affect student achievement levels will be a major focus for FE.

Section 2 Post-16 Assessment Regimes

This section describes the most recent developments within each qualification track and looks at each regime within the following structure:

- Criteria
- Outcome statements
- Codes of practice
- Internal assessment
- External assessment
- Grading
- Verification
- Certification

The structure provides a general framework for comparing the assessment regimes as all the tracks have agreed processes for internal and external assessment, verification/moderation and certification. Although the term outcome statements is not appropriate to A level, reference is made here to the learning objectives and guidance is given on how grading or recording of performance operates in the different tracks.

The first part of this section gives a background to the latest developments within the National Curriculum and GCSE assessment and is then followed by a description of A level assessment, NVQs and GNVQs.

The National Curriculum and its Assessment

The review of the National Curriculum began in April 1993 and an Interim report was produced in July 1993. The Final Report (December 1993) proposes a review of all the National Curriculum subjects, with the aim of having new subject Orders available for introduction in September 1995 for Key Stages 1-3 and 1996 for Key Stage 4.

Background to the National Curriculum (NC)

The National Curriculum, as defined by the Education Reform Act consisted of **Core subjects**, English, mathematics and science and in Wales, Welsh, and **foundation subjects**, art, geography,history,music,physical education and technology and a modern foreign language for pupils from the age of eleven. Religious education is not part of the National Curriculum, but all schools are required by the 1944 Education Act to teach it,and the 1988 Education Reform Act says that Religious Education should be Christian "in the main" but taking into account the other principal religions. From September 1994 sex education will also be a statutory requirement at Key Stages 3 and 4.

The curriculum for each subject is set out in statutory **subject Orders** which specify **programmes of study** (the matters, skills and processes to be taught) and the **attainment targets** (the knowledge, skills and understanding) to be acquired.

The National Curriculum is structured in four Key Stages or phases of learning :

- Key Stage 1 – pupils aged 5-7
- Key Stage 2 – pupils aged 7-11
- Key Stage 3 – pupils aged 11-14
- Key Stage 4 – students aged 14-16

The Ten Level Scale

In all subjects (except art, music and physical education) each attainment target is arranged hierarchically in ten levels of achievement known as the ten level scale. **Statements of attainment** seek to define what a pupil should know, understand and be able to do at each level.

National Tests

Currently national tests or standard tests are prescribed in English, mathematics, science and Welsh.

Main Recommendations from the Final Report

- Revision of the subject Orders to reduce each subject to a compulsory core and non-statutory element
- Retention of the ten level scale, with adjustments, at Key Stages 1-3 and the use of GCSE grades and other qualifications for Key Stage 4 accreditation.
- National tests to be simplified
- Revision of the curriculum at Key Stage 4

Revision of the subject Orders

A simultaneous revision of all the subject Orders is to take place to reduce the level of prescription and "slim down" the National Curriculum.

The overall approach of reducing the prescriptive element in each subject will be to divide the existing programmes of study into statutory core elements which must be taught and non-statutory material which will be available to schools to use in internal assessment. The discretionary time should be used to develop learners' literacy, oracy and numeracy skills.

The NC levels defined in the Orders are to be broadened to be available to pupils with special educational needs.

Retention of the ten level scale

It is proposed that the ten level scale should be retained only for Key Stages 1-3. Key Stage 4 achievement is to be measured through GCSE grades and other qualifications.

The reduction in the number of statements of attainment should provide a means of giving a clear definition of what is expected at each level.

National Tests

The National tests will be simplified and the time needed to administer the tests is to be reduced. In 1994 and 1995 there will be tests in the core subjects. The report indicates the arrangements for 1994 :

- Key Stage 1 tests in English and mathematics alone, with science covered by teacher assessment;
- Key stage 2 tests will be voluntary;
- Key Stage 3, the overall test time for pupils will be reduced by 50%

Revision of the Curriculum at Key Stage 4

The Final Report recommends that at Key Stage 4 (14-16) there should be mandatory requirements in terms of core subjects and short courses and greater flexibility for students to take particular options or pathways.

Mandatory requirements

Core Subjects	Short Courses	To be taught
English	Modern Foreign Language	Physical Education
Mathematics	Technology	Religious Education
Single Science		Sex Education

- The report indicates that the mandatory requirements would require about 60% of the total curriculum time available.
- History and/or Geography are no longer to be mandatory requirements at Key stage 4.
- No reference is made in the report to the cross-curricular themes of economic and industrial understanding; careers education and guidance; health education; education for citizenship; and environmental education.
- The report, however, recommends that careers education is to be encouraged.

Optional Pathways

Through the Key Stage 4 Advisory group and joint work with NCVQ the following optional pathways will be explored:

Academic pathway	to allow for extra GCSE options
Vocational pathway	to allow for the study of specific GNVQ units which could be certificated as a Part One qualification at either intermediate or foundation level; or to allow GCSE evidence for GNVQ attainment
Occupational pathway	to allow for the study of work-related options, an NVQ option or through qualifications offered by the vocational examining boards

A timetable for the review of the National Curriculum and proposals for Advisory groups has been set for the distribution of new Orders to schools in January 1995 and their implementation in September 1995. The membership of the Key Stage 4 Advisory Group includes an NCVQ representative, members with examining and vocational education experience,teachers and head teachers and representatives from sixth form colleges and colleges of further education.

Implications for the further education phase

The proposed changes to Key Stage 4 which will allow students to opt for particular pathways will mean that:

- Colleges will need to ensure that post-16 programmes recognise previous qualifications of students.
  If a Part One GNVQ at intermediate or foundation level is agreed with specific units for completion in schools, colleges will need to make provision for such students to acquire the full qualification.
- The use of evidence from GCSE to accredit the core skill units of communication, application of number and information technology, will involve colleges in developing systems to ensure credit transfer.
- The GCSE examining boards which currently offer a range of vocationally oriented syllabuses which are approved under section 5 of ERA for use in schools may wish to extend their current range to provide appropriate GCSEs for vocational pathways.
- The vocational awarding bodies, CGLI and RSA who at present offer vocationally oriented syllabuses which have been approved against GCSE/KS4 criteria for technology and business may extend into other areas.
- Sixteen year olds who come to further education will have a much greater diversity of knowledge and skills accredited through a wider range of qualifications. The information from students' national record of achievement will be central to the progression of these learners.

The general lesson from the introduction of the National Curriculum has been that the assessment and recording of achievement must be at a level which can be managed by teachers and institutions. The recognition of the role of internal assessment has been an important outcome of the review. The review will mean that GCSEs in each of the subjects will need to be revised to build on or match new Orders. The following looks specifically at GCSEs in National Curriculum subjects.

General Certificate of Secondary Education NC subjects

GCSE was introduced in 1988 and with the implementation of the National Curriculum has become the main form of assessment at Key Stage 4. In 1992 there was a total of 4,193,041 candidates with approximately 642,000 in English, and 572,000 in Science,representing the two most popular subjects.

Criteria

In subjects where National Curriculum Orders apply to KS4, GCSE subject criteria and syllabuses are being brought into line with the requirements of the Orders on a rolling programme. The GCSE regulations set the framework for all syllabuses and in NC subjects the assessment objectives of the syllabus must match the attainment targets of the specific subject. The further changes to the subject Orders announced in the Final Report will mean that current syllabuses will have to be revised.

In GCSE assessment, validity and reliability depend upon consistency in:

- the setting of examination papers which meet the assessment objectives;
- the marking criteria and schemes which guide external and internal assessments.

Outcome Statements

The term "outcome statement" is not used within GCSE but the knowledge, skills and understanding which candidates are expected to have acquired in a NC subject are identified as the attainment targets. The number of attainment targets varies for each subject and is given in the subject Orders.

The current National Curriculum is based on a ten-level scale which indicates the level that learners should achieve at a particular stage. In each attainment target, the levels are described in one or more statements of attainment.

For example, in English, attainment target one (AT1) is speaking and listening, with statements of attainment related to personal accounts (recount personal views and ideas), collaboration and discussion (share and exchange views and ideas), information and explanation (use language to inform and explain), etc.

Programmes of study describe the essential ground to be covered and give advice on delivery.

GCSE Mandatory code of practice

In January 1993 SEAC (now SCAA) published a new code of practice to govern the operation of GCSE exams. As a mandatory code it is intended to ensure the quality and consistency across all the examining groups offering GCSE.

There are currently six examining groups in Britain offering GCSE:

- Midland Examining Group (MEG);
- Northern Examinations Assessment Board (NEAB);
- Northern Ireland Schools Examinations and Assessments Council (NISEAC);
- Southern Examining Group (SEG);
- University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC);
- Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC).

The vocational awarding bodies,RSA and CGLI, also offer GCSEs in technology and business.

NISEAC is not bound by the Code of Practice and is developing its own code. Each examining group operates on a national basis providing GCSE examinations for schools and colleges across the country.

The GCSE mandatory code outlines:

- the responsibilities of the examining groups and the examining group personnel;

- the setting of question papers and mark schemes for terminal examinations and end of module tests;
- the requirements for coursework assessment and moderation;
- the setting of grade/level boundaries;
- the assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The Code clarifies the role of each examining group's governing council and the various roles of the examiners and moderators within each group.

Internal assessment

Internal assessment is based on coursework which is normally assessed by the teacher and moderated by the awarding body.

In NC subjects the coursework must be based on the programmes of study and focused on statements of attainment and the awarding body must provide centres with clear instructions on the presentation of folders. The examining group must also provide guidance and training to support teachers in setting appropriate tasks, marking and standardising coursework.

The **marking criteria specified in the syllabus guide** teacher assessment. The **mark scheme devised by the teachers** is aimed at securing consistency and teachers are required to annotate each piece of assessed work to show how the marks have been awarded.

The following are the current upper limits to the weighting of the coursework element in each subject:

Subject	**Course work limit**
English	40%
English Literature	30%
Mathematics	20%
Science	30%
Technology	40-60%
Geography	25%
History	25%
Modern Foreign Language	30%

For all GCSE courses, at least 50% of the credit must come from terminal examinations.

External assessment

External assessment is based on terminal examinations related to the syllabus. The consistency of the question papers and mark schemes are the responsibility of the chief examiner and are evaluated through **scrutiny** reports by SCAA. Examining groups must prepare an **assessment grid** to ensure that question papers accurately reflect the attainment targets of the subject.

The examination is selective, based on a sample of the knowledge, skills and understanding outlined in the syllabus. Students are prepared for the final exam through the evaluation of specimen question papers which are provided by the examining group.

Grading

Grading of the coursework and examination paper is based on an A-G scale with starred A (A*) grades being introduced from 1994.

Unlike GNVQs there are no grading criteria for GCSE as a whole, each syllabus has **grade descriptors** and awarding committees adjudicate the **setting of boundaries**. Final folders and exam papers are placed in particular grade boundaries through the professional judgement of teachers and examiners on the basis of examining group grade descriptions.

Marking criteria, specified in the syllabus, guide the final assessment of coursework. A system of tiered papers has been introduced to National Curriculum syllabuses in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and will be introduced to other NC subjects as they come on stream.

This means that teachers need to determine, often at an early stage in order to meet examining group registration deadlines, the grade that a student is able to achieve so that they are entered for the appropriate paper.

Moderation

Centres are required to ensure that internal moderation of the assessment process has taken place and to verify the final course work marks.

Coursework is externally moderated by the examining group on a sampling basis in order to ensure consistency of marks across and within centres. Where appropriate, the moderator requests samples of specific coursework tasks and associated mark schemes devised by the teacher.

The examining group must provide training and guidance to all moderators. Unlike the NVQ system, however, there are currently no specific training awards or qualifications required of moderators.

SCAA carries out scrutiny exercises to monitor the comparability of examining group practice. About two syllabuses per year in up to 20% of subjects are scrutinised to check the procedures, evaluate the quality of assessment material and enhance grade comparability.

Certification

Certificates are awarded to candidates on achieving the minimum pass grade. There is no unit accreditation for candidates.

Students on modular GCSEs must complete all the end-of-module assessments in order to achieve a certificate for the full qualification. The final certificate indicates the subject and grade achieved.

Advanced Level A and AS exams

Advanced or A levels were introduced in 1951, replacing the single Higher School Certificate, and AS exams in 1987 to develop breadth in the A level curriculum. In 1992 there were approximately 731,000 A level candidate entries for 416 A level syllabuses. The majority of candidates, about 70% take A levels when they are 18. Most of the remaining entries come from mature candidates. Sixty-one per cent of entries are from school, the remainder come from FE, tertiary and sixth form colleges.

AS courses were introduced in 1987 and were first examined in June 1989 with 53,000 subject entries in 1992. AS examinations were designed to broaden A level studies and were intended to last two years, occupying half the teaching and learning time of an A level, but demanding the same standard of performance. The Secretary of State has announced his commitment to A Levels, and wishes to strengthen AS. He has asked for advice from SCAA by Easter 1994 on the remaining obstacles to a greater take-up of AS.

The **advanced level examining boards** are the:

- Associated Examining Board (AEB)
- Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB)
- Northern Ireland Schools and Examination Council (NISEAC)
- Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examinations Board (OCSEB)
- University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES)
- University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC)
- University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations (UODLE)
- Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)

Criteria

In March 1992 SEAC produced the **Principles for A and AS examinations** to ensure that the various examining boards conform to a common set of general principles in the design of GCEs. It was stated that the reform of existing syllabuses should follow the phased introduction of subjects as in the National Curriculum, with new syllabuses becoming available for examination in 1996. However, the changes to the National Curriculum will have affected this aim.

The key Principles are :

- that there should be adequate breadth, depth and balance in a subject syllabus;
- that learning and assessment requirements are specified in sufficient detail to secure rigour ;
- that AS levels should occupy half the study time of A level syllabuses;
- that any course made up of modules is demonstrably coherent;
- that syllabuses provide a sufficient basis for further study at degree level or equivalent;
- that assessment should be predominantly by means of external terminal examination with coursework limited to a maximum of 20% of the total marks available in most subjects;
- that modular syllabuses include a terminal examination and a substantial element of external assessment.

Modular syllabuses

In April 1993 SEAC announced the development of modular A and AS exams and have indicated the ground rules for the development of modular syllabuses:

- each module must be assessed at the full A level standard (no allowance is to be made for maturation);
- 30% of the total assessment must be by external terminal examinations;

- each module must be at least 15% of the total assessment;
- coursework is limited to a total of 20% in most subjects;
- all subjects to include synoptic assessment which assesses aspects that relate to the whole subject and not just to individual modules.

FEU's Briefing Note *Modular A Levels* indicates the subjects currently on offer and those under development by the various examining boards.

Development of subject cores for A and AS

SCAA is working on the development of subject cores for inclusion in both A and AS syllabuses. The subject core would be common to all syllabuses within a subject and would therefore be a common element across the various syllabuses within a modular A level framework.

Each core would consist of a body of knowledge, understanding and skills considered essential to the subject and would normally not exceed 50% of an A level and 70% of AS syllabuses.

The initial consultation in the spring and summer of 1993 involved ten subjects and further consultation will extend the number of subjects being revised. The first five subjects approved by SEAC in July 1993 for teaching in September 1994 are English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, and physics.

Outcome statements

Syllabuses and assessment objectives guide the teacher in the preparation of candidates for assessment and determine the parameters for the final examination paper. The term 'outcomes' is not appropriate at advanced level, although some syllabuses do specify learning outcomes.

The syllabus indicates the subject knowledge which is to be assessed through coursework (if appropriate) and final examination. The examination boards may offer more than one syllabus in a particular subject and the content of subject syllabuses varies across the eight boards although some boards operate an inter-board common core. Examining board regulations and syllabuses state the aims and objectives of the syllabus, the knowledge and abilities to be tested, coursework regulations, and the form of the examination.

Internal assessment

Certain syllabuses include assessment through coursework, and where this is a component the board issues guidelines on the assessment of coursework. Each syllabus will indicate the proportion of the total marks awarded to coursework; the nature of the work required; the conditions under which the assessment tasks have to be carried out.

Coursework marking schemes provide tutors with a guide for internal assessment, and teachers are expected to be able to justify marks awarded. Coursework must be submitted to the board by a particular deadline set by the board and must fall within the categories given for acceptable demonstration of knowledge.

External assessment

External assessment is in the main through two and three hour examinations with most subjects involving more than one paper.

The examination does not assess all the syllabus, but sampling is used a as a way of assessing the whole syllabus. All examinations must be sat at a particular date and time designated by the awarding body.

Board mark schemes direct examiners in the marking of papers, and examiners' reports support centres in the preparation of candidates. SEAC's *General Scrutiny Report* (May 1993) on A and AS examinations indicates that an increasing number of boards are now publishing their mark schemes, and SEAC welcomed this as an initiative which would help centres understand further the standards applied.

Grading

Grading in A levels is based on the professional judgement of examiners. Borderline reviews, the examination of scripts from previous years and statistical quality assurance are all used to monitor practice. The General Scrutiny Report indicates that a variety of grading methods is operated by the boards. In most of the examinations, grading was carried out by component, and marks were aggregated to calculate final grades. The current grading system is based on five passing grades A-E with N indicating a narrow failure and a U for unclassified performance. Consultation on a starred A (A*) at advanced level is taking place.

Moderation

Chief examiners' and moderators' reports give guidance to centres and often include exemplar mark schemes and other guidance material. Moderation of coursework which is overseen by the Chief Moderator evaluates and verifies the standard of centre marking, mark schemes, and the standard of coursework.

The practice of involving centres in agreement trials and sending them thorough reports on the performance of their candidates' coursework is particularly commended in the General Scrutiny report.

Coordination meetings of examiners and moderators ensure that there is agreement on the operation of exams, marking of examination scripts and coursework moderation.

Certification

Usually at the end of a two year period and often at the end of one year in the case of mature students, candidates complete their A Level and are awarded a full certificate on successful completion. There is no unit certification. Certificates indicate the subject, syllabus and grade achieved and sometimes the component marks or grades.

National Vocational Qualifications NVQs

Following the publication of the White Paper, Working Together - Education and Training, the Employment Department set up NCVQ in 1986 to establish a national framework for vocational qualifications. Its role is to accredit the NVQ and GNVQ qualifications submitted to it by awarding bodies and to ensure the quality and consistency of NVQ delivery across the various awarding bodies.

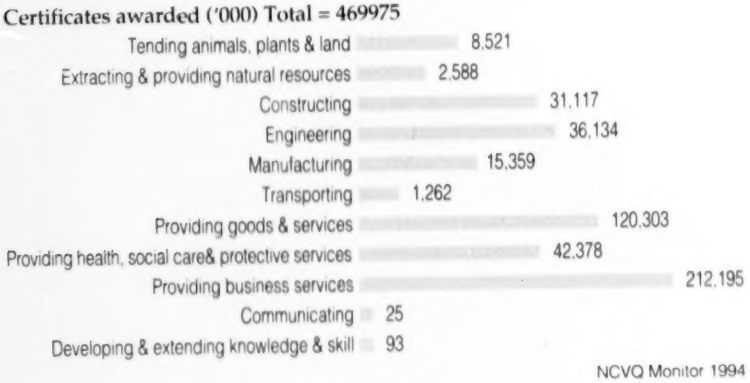
Standards and lead bodies

The standards within NVQs are employment led in that the industry itself defines the competences required from a functional analysis of the industry. A lead industry body or lead body is set up representing all those in the relevant industry and often includes, employers, trade unionists, educators and trainers.

More recently lead bodies have been grouped into Occupational Standards Councils (OSCs) which will become the bodies contracting with the ED.

The Employment Department's aim is to secure the accreditation of NVQs covering 90% of the workforce occupations by the year 1995.

Number of certificates awarded for each area


Certificates awarded ('000) Total = 469975
Tending animals, plants & land 8,521
Extracting & providing natural resources 2,588
Constructing 31,117
Engineering 36,134
Manufacturing 15,359
Transporting 1,262
Providing goods & services 120,303
Providing health, social care& protective services 42,378
Providing business services 212,195
Communicating 25
Developing & extending knowledge & skill 93

NCVQ Monitor 1994

Criteria

The NVQ criteria used by the Council to guide awarding bodies in the specification of qualifications and to determine whether a qualification can be accepted as part of the framework were established in March 1991. Revisions to the NVQ Criteria and Guide are being made and the content of the Common Accord will be included.

The fundamental criteria are that a qualification must be:

- based on national standards required for performance in employment;
- based on assessments of the outcomes of learning, arrived at independently of any mode, duration or location of learning; and awarded on the basis of valid and reliable work-based assessments;
- free from barriers which restrict access and progression;
- free from overt or covert discriminatory practices with regard to gender, age, race or creed and designed to pay due regard to the special needs of individuals.

Outcome statements

The NVQ framework classifies NVQs according to areas of occupational competence and level. The five levels relate to competence in performance at work and are defined by the range of activities from basic routine work at Level 1, to complex techniques within varied contexts at Level 5. Within further and higher education the levels are frequently compared to academic levels from foundation, through to GCSE, A level, degree and postgraduate

achievement. The standards determined by the lead body are built into a qualification that meet the criteria by an awarding body and are submitted to NCVQ for approval.

NVQs are based on occupational lead body standards and consist of :

- units of competence — made up of a coherent set of elements. Units can be separately certificated
- elements of competence — which reflect those activities that a person should be able to do at work
- performance criteria — which define the acceptable level of performance required in employment
- range statements — which indicate the various circumstances or contexts in which competence must be applied

Codes of practice - Awarding bodies Common Accord from NCVQ

The **Awarding Bodies Common Accord** was produced as a draft for consultation in November 1992 and was revised in August 1993. With the continued accreditation of NVQs in a wide range of occupational areas and expansion into Level 5, NCVQ has become increasingly aware of the need to maintain consistent standards in assessment and verification across the 70 plus awarding bodies currently offering qualifications accredited by NCVQ. The document is a code of practice, similar to the GCSE Mandatory Code in that it is intended to standardise the operation of the various awarding bodies whose awards the Council accredits.

Basic principles of the Common Accord

Common terminology

There should be standard terms in the assessment and verification system: **assessor**, **internal verifier**, and **external verifier** and **approved centre**. NCVQ emphasises that it is not possible to combine the functions of assessment and verification.

Certification to national standards of assessors and verifiers

NCVQ requires that by April 1995 external and internal verifiers are qualified with the following units from the TDLB standards (as a minimum):

- assessors — D32, and/or D33
- internal verifier — D34
- external verifiers — D35

Also by April 1995 approval arrangements for centres should require that they have action plans to certificate all existing and new assessors within an agreed timescale.

Defined roles in quality assurance

Key components of quality assurance need to be consistently and unambiguously assigned:

- Approved centres: deliver assessment and should have internal procedures to ensure the quality and consistency of assessment
- Awarding bodies: verify that assessment in an approved centre is carried out systematically, validly and to approved standards through the operation of external verifiers, and must ensure that appeals procedures are in place if a centre wishes to dispute decisions
- External Verifiers: verify the internal systems of approved centres on behalf of the awarding body and sample assessment practices and decisions

Explicit criteria for approving centres

Applications for approval should be assessed against a common set of criteria covering:

- management systems, physical resources, staff resources, assessment, quality assurance and control, equal opportunities

The code includes draft centre approval and verification criteria which will be developed further in conjunction with the awarding bodies during 1993-4.

Quality Assurance and control

External verifiers to sample candidate records, as a guideline based on either ten per cent or the square root of the number of registered candidates, subject to a minimum number of five; and to visit and prepare a report on the centre's achievements against the approval criteria. Awarding bodies should encourage and support centres in developing their equal opportunities policies and monitor progress and make arrangements for the continuing development of external verifiers.

Internal assessment

In the case of NVQs, the terms internal and external assessment are not appropriate.

All NVQ assessment must be in the workplace or within realistic work environments (RWEs). There is no compulsory external testing as part of the accrediting body requirements, but some sectors include external tests as part of their scheme assessment.

Assessment is essentially based on the process of making judgements on whether the performance criteria for each element have been met. Performance must be demonstrated and assessed in conditions as close as possible to those in which it would normally be practised. Where the work environment does not provide access to the demonstration of performance, alternative forms of assessment can be provided.

The list of evidence sources from the NCVQ guide identifies:

- direct evidence of performance — observation in the workplace, observation of example activities, simulations and skill tests;
- indirect evidence of performance — products, reports, evidence of prior achievement;
- supplementary evidence — oral questioning, open written answers, multiple-choice tests, projects and assignments.

Any assessment system must have regard to:

- Validity — the nature of the evidence collected
- Sufficiency — the adequacy of evidence available
- Reliability — the consistency of the judgements made by assessors
- Cost effectiveness — the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the system

The assessment and accreditation of prior learning within the NVQ assessment process is fully recognised and has been a significant development which has influenced assessment in further and higher education. If a candidate has practised the required competence in work or outside and can produce evidence of their competence from past performance, this can be used as one of the sources of evidence.

Unlike GNVQs, the demonstration of competence in the core skills units is not necessary, unless a particular lead body has chosen to include these units in its awards. Although no lead bodies has adopted the core skill units to date, it is envisaged that in the future they will do so.

External assessment

There is usually no external compulsory testing involved in NVQs. Most evidence for assessment is derived from the workplace or RWE but there are examples of sectors using skill testing or written tests to gauge both skills and knowledge.

Grading

NVQs are not graded, candidates are judged to be competent or not yet competent as an assessment of their performance in particular areas. The final qualification indicates the units achieved, those areas which have been "mastered" by the candidate.

Verification

All centres must ensure that the assessment process attempts to secure the consistency of assessments through the development of appropriate verification procedures and the certification of assessors and internal verifiers.

Centres that are approved to offer NVQs are covered by the NCVQ and awarding body guidance. The new NVQ Guide will subsume the guidance indicated in the Common Accord regarding the certification of assessors and verifiers which recommends certification under the Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) standards. The TDLB has developed a range of units and awards based on the training cycle and coded A-E. The functions of assessment and verification are covered by the D units. Guidance from NCVQ states that by April 1995 centre submissions to awarding bodies for approval to run NVQ programmes should clarify the procedures that they will be introducing to ensure that all assessors of NVQs are certificated.

NCVQ's guidance states that by April 1995;

- external verifiers should have, as a minimum, D35 from the TDLB awards;
- internal verifiers should have, as a minimum, D34 from the TDLB awards.

An action plan is to be drafted by colleges to indicate the timescales for the certification of assessors to D32 and/or D 33.

Certification

Certificates are issued by the awarding body either for a full qualification or particular units that make up the NVQ candidates can pursue. NVQs should be independent of time constraints. Individual awarding bodies issue guidelines on registration and the recognition of prior learning.

General National Vocational Qualifications GNVQs

In May 1991 the Secretary of State gave NCVQ the remit to develop a qualification which would be aimed at those in full-time education in schools and colleges and which would provide a broad- based vocational education for learners. The qualification although placed within the NVQ model of levels and unit specifications, is not based on occupational competence , but is aimed at combining vocational skills and the demonstration of knowledge which underpin a vocational area.

GNVQs in five broad vocational areas at Levels 2 and 3 were developed for phased introduction in 1992, with national availability in 1993 and Level 1 also being phased in. NCVQ's phased plan for GNVQ development will mean that by 1995 there will be 14 GNVQ programme areas. In 1993-94 there are over 1,400 GNVQ centres with 83,000 candidates in total. A breakdown of candidate numbers by programme areas indicates there are (approximately):

- 34,000 Business;
- 18,000 Health and Social Care;
- 14,000 Leisure and Tourism;
- 9,000 Art and Design;
- 1,800 Manufacturing.

In July 1993, the Secretary of State, John Patten, announced a change in the identification of the levels as they were seen as an obstacle to the parity of esteem.

The levels were given new titles:

- Advanced Level 3
- Intermediate Level 2
- Foundation Level 1

It was stated by DFE that Advanced GNVQs or vocational A levels would "help parents, employers and HE admissions tutors understand the level of the qualification and secure greater parity between the academic and vocational curriculum".

Each GNVQ level is made up of a set number of mandatory and optional units together with mandatory core skills units, application of number, communication and information technology, and the potential for learners to take additional units. Unlike NVQs, each level has a fixed number of mandatory and optional units.

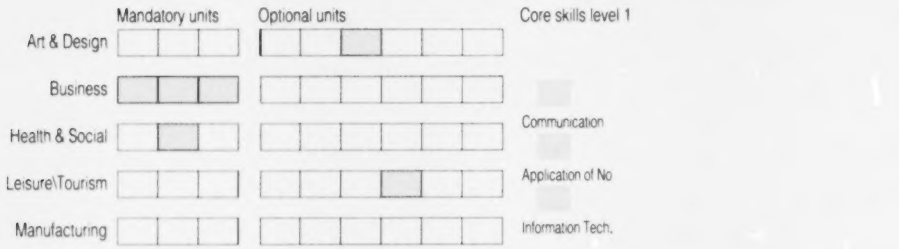
General criteria

The criteria for GNVQs are derived from those for NVQs so that both kinds of qualifications form part of an extended national framework. However, GNVQs are not based on lead body standards or occupational competence, but on standards in a broad vocational area. These standards are developed by working groups with a membership consisting of relevant lead bodies, HE, schools and colleges, professional bodies, employers and NCVQ and awarding bodies. NCVQ headed the development of the first five GNVQ areas and then the role of coordinating development was contracted-out to the awarding bodies for the next phase of development. NCVQ also has Advisory Committees for each GNVQ area with representatives from similar areas which advise on implementation, evaluation and revision of GNVQs post-initial accreditation. The GNVQ criteria are being revised in 1994 to give further guidance to awarding bodies and those developing GNVQs.

The criteria state the aims; general criteria; specifications of achievements (format, units, elements,performance criteria, range); level criteria; assessment; grading; and quality assurance requirements for GNVQs.

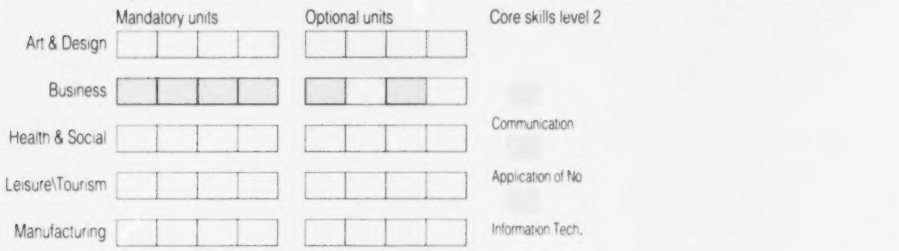
Structure of a Foundation GNVQ

3 mandatory units, 3 optional units, plus core skills (according to the rules of combination)



Structure of an Intermediate GNVQ

4 mandatory units, 2 optional units, plus core skills (optional units within the same programme area)



Structure of an Advanced GNVQ

8 mandatory units, 4 optional units, plus core skills (optional units within the same programme area)

Assessment criteria

Assessment in GNVQs is of the evidence collected to demonstrate requirements of all the elements of all units for a specific vocational area. Performance should be demonstrated and assessed in activities which offer the opportunity to demonstrate the required skills, knowledge and understanding through assignments, projects, and other activities. Unlike NVQs, GNVQs do not assess workplace competence but achievement in vocational, work-related assessment opportunities. External assessment aims to ensure consistency and assess underpinning knowledge.

Access to assessment should be independent of mode, location or duration of learning, and unlike GCSE and A level there are assessment opportunities to repeat external tests within a single registration. Unit certification and credit accumulation are possible in the GNVQ system.

GNVQs are based on the `mastery' notion of learning demonstrated in NVQs, which identifies candidates as either competent or not yet competent. The introduction of portfolio grading has meant that assessors have to operate a grading system within mastery learning.

Outcome statements

Similar to NVQs in the format of outcome statements, a GNVQ unit is made up of:

- elements of achievement – which specify the detailed knowledge, skills and understanding of the vocational area
- performance criteria – which define successful performance
- range – which gives the major facets or dimensions which must be taken into account in assessing a candidate's skill and understanding
- evidence indicators – which provide guidance on suitable forms of evidence and minimum requirements for sufficiency

The similarly criterion-referenced core skills units – Communication, Application of Number, Information Technology – are to be assessed through the assessment activity or assignment and are a mandatory requirement. Personal skills units,Working with Others and Improving own Learning and Performance are also available but are not compulsory.

Each mandatory unit must be accompanied by a test specification and model test which sets the parameters for the external assessment requirements.

Code of practice

Although there is no detailed NCVQ guide to GNVQs the Criteria could be seen to be a general code of practice. The awarding bodies also have their own guidance for centres. The new code of practice on external assessment indicates the agreed practice for the operation of the awarding bodies with regard to external assessment.

Internal assessment

Candidates are required to produce a porttolio of evidence to demonstrate sufficient coverage of all the elements and all performance criteria. Each form of evidence must indicate which elements are being met. Teachers devise assignments, activities, simulated situations and role plays within a vocational context for students to demonstrate achievement which relate to a particular group of elements within or across units. Individual pieces of work are assessed, and often awarded an 'indicative grade'.

Candidates are tested on the mandatory units, and teachers or lecturers in setting internal assessments must prepare students for external testing.

External assessment

The **Code of Practice on External Assessment for 1993-4** agreed between BTEC, CGLI, RSA and endorsed by NCVQ outlines the agreed practice for GNVQ external testing which includes the following:

Form and coverage

- various forms of external testing are agreed
  - machine-markable tests
  - short answer tests
  - case studies/assignments
- for each mandatory unit there is to be a single test specification setting out the scope of the knowledge, concepts, principles and relationships that are subject to assessment. The test specifications for the mandatory units give examples of questions divided into `categories of knowledge' and focuses.

The three awarding bodies will produce a common model test to guide the design of separate awarding body tests;

- each test will last one hour and have an agreed number of 30-40 items;
- tests will be available four times a year for each mandatory unit at a fixed date and time and each awarding body will publish its test schedule by the September of that year;
- awarding bodies to make arrangements for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Marking

- the pass mark for tests will normally be 70%;
- case studies/assignments will be internally marked and externally verified.

Further information is given in the code regarding administration and monitoring of results.

Grading

The grading of GNVQ qualifications is based on the assessment of the portfolio of evidence which must include:

- evidence that the candidate has passed all the mandatory unit tests;
- evidence of coverage of all the elements and performance criteria in all the mandatory and optional units;
- evidence of coverage of all the core skills unit elements and performance criteria at a minimum level 1 for Foundation, level 2 for Intermediate, and level 3 for Advanced.

GNVQ qualifications are graded pass, merit or distinction. Candidates who meet the requirements for all the units for the award of a GNVQ are awarded a pass and can be considered for a grade above the basic pass grade.

Students are awarded a merit or distinction on the basis of successfully meeting the grading criteria. Each level of GNVQ, Foundation, Intermediate, Advanced, has associated grading criteria to guide teachers in their final assessment of the grade to be allocated to each candidate portfolio.

At Foundation and Intermediate levels the grading, themes and criteria relate to planning and information handling and seeking, and at Advanced level include evaluation. The grading criteria are to be revised to include a further grading theme, which will relate to the content of each area.

Verification

Awarding bodies are required to ensure through external verification of centre practice, that standardisation processes are in place in each centre.

The requirements of GNVQ assessment and verification are set out in the GNVQ Criteria and relate to the competence of assessors and verifiers, processes which need to be followed, and the responsibilities of awarding bodies regarding quality assurance systems. The Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) standards indicate the requirements of assessors and verifiers.

Internal verification systems must be in place to ensure validity, sufficiency and reliability (see NVQ section).

Centre practice is monitored through the awarding bodies' external verifiers who must visit the centre and report on the centre's assessment practices.

Awarding bodies have instruments to monitor the operation of external verifiers and to standardise regional practice.

Certification

Currently, only the vocational awarding bodies, BTEC, CGLI and RSA issue GNVQ certificates or unit credits which indicate the title and level of award. The GNVQ award for the full qualification lists all the titles of the units achieved and carries the NCVQ insignia.

Summary **GCSE assessment** NC subjects

Criteria	**Subject criteria** and **syllabuses** devised by the examining group and approved by SCAA.
Outcome statements	**Attainment Targets** (ATs) indicate the necessary knowledge,skills and understanding to be assessed. **Programmes of Study** (PoS) indicate the areas to be covered. **Assessment Objectives** derived from the attainment targets and programmes of study are indicated in syllabuses.
Codes of practice	**GCSE Mandatory Code of Practice** set by SCAA. Compliance with the Code is a requirement for the approval of GCSE qualifications and associated syllabuses.
Internal assessment	**Coursework** is internally set and assessed by the teacher and moderated by the examining group. Coursework limits established for each subject (see table)
External assessment	Terminal examinations and end of module tests set by the awarding body. Assessment tiers, or differentiated papers, set by the awarding body in the core subjects. **Assessment Grid** and **Mark schemes** guide external examiners in marking of exam scripts.
Grading	Grading Starred A* – G
Moderation	Standardisation of marking within centres guided by explicit parameters, **marking criteria** and instructions from the examining group. Standards for external examinations established through the procedures governing the marking and monitoring of examinations to aid the development of a "common understanding" of the requirements. External moderator appointed by the examining group.Chief examiner oversees examinations. SCAA **scrutiny** reports monitor practice across the examining group.
Certification	Issued by the examining group on successful completion of all components.

Summary GCE Assessment

Criteria The **Principles** for A and AS qualifications produced by SEAC in March 1992 lay down the essential broad features defining the qualifications and the balance between internal and external assessment.

Outcome statements Advanced level qualifications are not in general stated in outcomes but the **syllabus** defines the subject knowledge and **assessment objectives**.

Code of practice A code is being developed for operation in 1994.

Internal assessment Some syllabuses include an element of **coursework assessment** which may include extended essays, oral assessments and demonstration of skills.

Each syllabus will indicate the total marks that can be awarded to coursework. The Principles state that no more than 20 % can be awarded to coursework in most subjects.

External assessment External assessment is mainly through the setting of examination papers that sample the knowledge indicated in the syllabus.

Grading Successful candidates are awarded a single grade from A – N. The introduction of a starred A grade is under consultation.

Moderation Moderation of internal coursework is achieved through internal agreement trials and the standardisation of examinations through the procedures laid down by the board.

SCAA monitors the quality assurance systems of the boards through its **Scrutiny** Reports.

Certification Certificates are awarded on the successful completion of the internal coursework (if appropriate) and the external examination.

Certificates indicate the syllabus, subject and grade achieved and sometimes component grades or marks.

Summary NVQ assessment

Criteria The **NVQ Criteria** established in March 1991 and revised mid-1994 state that assessment should be: based on national Standards; be independent of time constraints; and work-based.

Outcome statements NVQs are based on occupational **Lead Body Standards** and are defined in terms of **competence** statements, performance criteria, and range statements grouped in units. Unlike GNVQs, there is no fixed number of units to an NVQ.

Codes of practice The **Awarding Bodies Common Accord** (1993) details the agreement reached by NCVQ with the awarding bodies on the assessment and verification of NVQ programmes. Its contents are being built into the revised Guide to NVQs (available mid-1994).

Internal assessment The assessment of competence in the workplace or realistic work environment relies upon the demonstration of competence and the **collection of evidence** which is assessed by an internal assessor who may be a supervisor or tutor.

External assessment There is no external testing as part of the accrediting body fundamental criteria for assessment but some sectors include external tests.

Grading There is no grading in NVQS, candidates are deemed to be competent once they have **mastered** the occupational competence requirements stated in the units.

Verification By April 1995, all centres must develop an action plan indicating their progress towards certificating all assessors. By April 1995 all internal verifiers must have as a minimum D34 from the TDLB awards; and external verifiers D 35. Centre practice must comply with awarding body guidelines.

Certification Unit based and full certification

Summary GNVQ assessment

Criteria	**GNVQ criteria** from NCVQ outline the aims,format of GNVQ specification, criteria for each level, additional units, assessment arrangements, grading,quality assurance and awarding body approval arrangements.
Outcome statements	The knowledge,skills and understanding to be demonstrated are specified as outcome statements within units of achievement. Units of achievement are specified as mandatory, optional, and core skills units, with potential additional units.
Codes of practice	The NCVQ and awarding bodies **code on external assessment** outlines the agreement reached on the arrangements for external testing. There is no over-arching Code of Practice.
Internal assessment	Learners produce a **portfolio of evidence** for final assessment to demonstrate achievement of the elements within each unit. Performance must be demonstrated and assessed in activities (e.g. investigations, simulations, and projects). Assessment should be free of mode, location, or duration of learning.
External assessment	There are **externally set tests on each of the mandatory units**. These tests can take the form of : machine markable tests, short answer responses or case studies/assignments. Candidates have to pass all the tests to achieve the award. Re-testing arrangements are provided by the awarding bodies.
Grading	A summative grade is awarded to the final portfolio on the basis of the effective demonstration of the NCVQ grading criteria for the particular level of GNVQ. Learners can achieve a **pass, merit or distinction** for the final qualification.
Verification	The Training and Development Lead Body Standards identify the awards available for assessors, internal and external verifiers. The awarding bodies indicate the requirements regarding certification of assessors and verifiers from the TDLB Standards and the required verification procedures.
Certification	The NCVQ system accommodates unit credit

Information sources

GCSE From SCAA

- GCSE Mandatory Code of Practice – January 1993
- The National Curriculum and its Assessment, Interim Report – July 1993
- The National Curriculum and its Assessment, Final Report – December 1994

A level and AS examinations From SCAA

- A and AS Principles – March 1992
- A and AS Examinations, General Scrutiny Report – May 1993

GNVQs From NCVQ

- GNVQ Criteria March 1993 (to be revised 1994)
- GNVQ Code of Practice for External Assessment (1993-4) – September 1993

NVQs From NCVQ

- NVQ Criteria – March 1991 (revised mid-1994)
- Guide to NVQs March 1991 (revised mid-1994)
- Awarding Bodies Common Accord – August 1993

Contact addresses

School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA)
Newcombe House
45 Notting Hill Gate
London W11 3JB
Tel : 071-229 1234

National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ)
222 Euston Road
London NW1 2BZ
Tel : 071-387 9898

GCE/GCSE Examining Bodies

The Associated Examining Board (AEB)
Stag Hill House
Guildford
Surrey GU2 5XJ
Tel: 0483-506506

Midland Examining Group
(contact UCLES for other regional examination boards)

Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB)
Devas Street
Manchester M15 6EX
Tel: 061-953 1180

Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board (OCSEB)
Purbeck House
Purbeck Road
Cambridge CB2 2PU
Tel: 0223-411211

Southern Examining Group
(contact AEB and Oxford School Examinations Board)

University of Cambridge Local Examinations (UCLES)
Syndicate Buildings
1 Hills Road
Cambridge CB1 2EU
Tel: 0223-61111

University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC)
32 Russell Square
London WC1 5DN
Tel: 071-331 4000

University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations (UODLE)
Ewert House
Ewert Place
Summertown
Oxford OX2 7BZ
Tel: 0865-54291

Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)
245 Western Ave
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel: 0222-561231

Vocational programmes — awarding bodies

Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC)
Central House
Upper Woburn Place
London WC1H OHH
Tel: 071-413 8400

City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G)
76 Portland Place
London W1N 4AA
Tel: 071-278 2468

Royal Society of Arts Examinations Board (RSA)
Westwood Way
Coventry CV4 8HS
Tel: 0203-470033

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